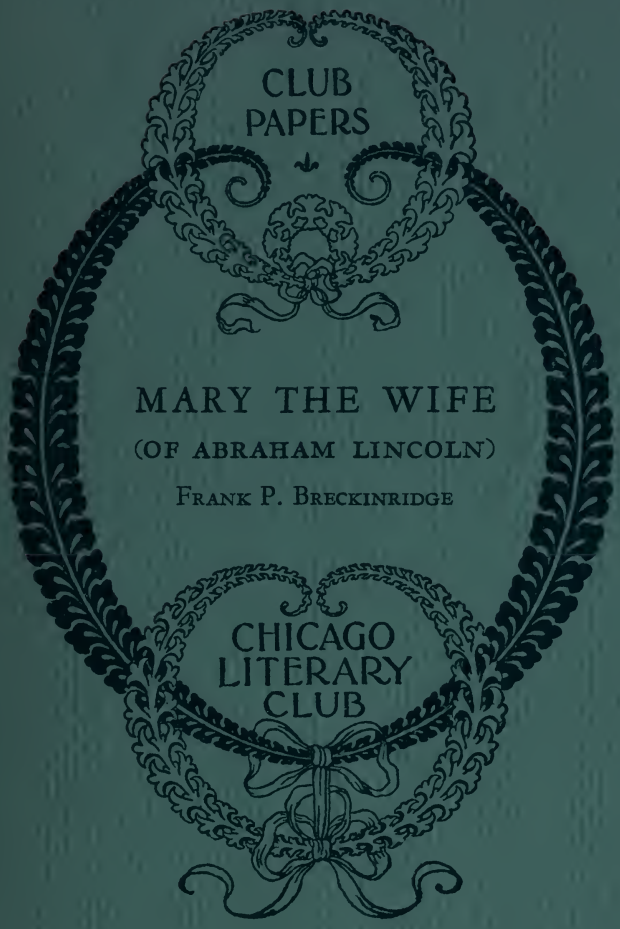

MARY THE WIFE

(OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN)

FRANK P. BRECKINRIDGE

LINCOLN ROOM

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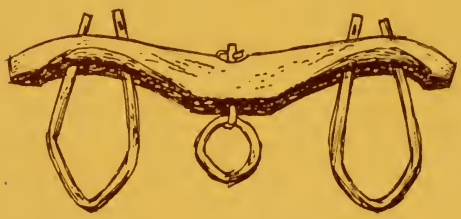

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MARY THE WIFE

(OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN)

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(OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN)

A Drama Adapted for Television

By
FRANK P. BRECKINRIDGE

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H3B74m
Lincoln Room

MARY THE WIFE

(OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

ELIZABETH TODD EDWARDS
DR. ANSON HENRY
MARY TODD LINCOLN
NINIAN EDWARDS
WILLIAM HERNDON
STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS
MRS. ELIZA KECKLEY
JOHN PARKER
WARD HILL LAMON
COLONEL CROOK

MEN AND WOMEN GUESTS

ACT I—The parlor of the Ninian Edwardses' home, Springfield, Illinois, June, 1840

ACT II—The upstairs sitting room, the White House, February, 1862

ACT III—The same, April, 1865

ACT I

It is a warm night in the summer of 1840 in the town of Springfield, Illinois, around early candlelight. The curtain rises on the sumptuous parlor of the wealthy NINIAN EDWARDS. *In the center of the upstage wall is a large pier glass, which might have been imported from Europe. It is as wide as two windows, stands about eight inches off the floor, reaches almost to the high ceiling, has a small ledge along the bottom, with a wide gold frame culminating at the top in an ornamental peak. It is carefully balanced right and left by two large doorways—each with double doors. The left doorway leads to the outer hall, the upstairs, and the front door; the right doorway leads to the dining-room, tonight the ballroom. Downstage left is a small horsehair sofa. The left wall has a large window hung with long light-weight white curtains. On stage right there are other windows and small furniture. A love seat is downstage right. On the walls are many fixtures holding candles. It is the evening of a small dancing party, and the formal parlor is polished and gleaming for the occasion.*

Behind the pier glass is a separate stage set with floor lights, a back-drop, and two characters, life-size wax figures in full costumes and wigs. When these lights are turned up and the backing behind the mirror is taken away, the picture through the glass is exactly like the drawing of a reception with President and Mrs. Lincoln in the White House.

At rise ELIZABETH EDWARDS *is putting the finishing touches to the parlor as* DR. ANSON HENRY *is coming in the door. He is taking off his raincoat. In the next room an orchestra is tuning up.*

ELIZABETH: Good evening, Dr. Henry—raining yet?

DR. HENRY: Not yet—might soon, Mrs. Edwards.

ELIZABETH: You think it will thunder?

DR. HENRY: Looks so—why?

ELIZABETH: Mary is so funny—gets so peculiar when it thunders.

DR. HENRY: You asked me to come before the party starts.

(*The orchestra starts tuning up softly offstage.*)

Well—here I am.

ELIZABETH: I want to talk to you about Mary. She *must* make up her mind. My sister has been here nearly a year and a half.

DR. HENRY: She's trying to pick the *top* man—never saw a man, woman, or child as ambitious as Mary Todd.

ELIZABETH: She's seeing Mr. Lincoln too often lately, but he's just not suitable. Dr. Henry, you must tell *her* that. At this party, I am throwing her with Judge Douglas. I think he has a great future.

DR. HENRY: I'll do my best, Mrs. Edwards—but Miss Mary is a Kentucky thoroughbred. She is high-spirited, and she may take the bit in her teeth. No human being can tell *her* what to do.

ELIZABETH: When Mary comes down, let me speak to her first—then you talk to her. Tell her what a future there is in politics for Judge Douglas—not Lincoln.

(*Exit* DR. HENRY.)

(*Music comes up loudly before* MARY TODD'S *entrance. The orchestra in the next room plays a spirited waltz, and* MARY *floats gaily into the room, waltzes around it, waving and smiling to her sister. She carries a few blossoms in her hand and finally comes to a stop in front of the big mirror.*)

MARY: I've decided to put these flowers in my hair (*looking at the effect in the glass*).

ELIZABETH: No . . . not in your hair—no one wears flowers in her hair.

MARY: I'm going to—it's going to be the fashion. I shall be the *first* lady in Springfield to wear flowers in her hair. They'll all come to it, you'll see.

ELIZABETH: Why must you always be first, Mary?

MARY (*with finality*): But that's the way I am made. I want the very finest of everything—dresses—dance partners. . . .

ELIZABETH: Now, Mary, I must talk with you seriously. You must make up your mind. Mr. Speed is a fine merchant with good prospects; but I suppose you want a politician.

MARY: Yes, sister. The man *I* marry is going to be *President* of the United States.

ELIZABETH: Why set your cap for a President? This is Illinois, not New York. And if that's your mind, what about Judge Douglas?

(MARY *turns around from the mirror.*)

MARY: Do you *really* think Judge Douglas will be President?

ELIZABETH: Everybody says he has a brilliant future.

MARY: What do they say about Mr. Lincoln's future?

ELIZABETH: Oh, he won't go far. Mary, you and Mr. Lincoln are just not suited to each other. You ought to know that. He is slow-going, a wilderness boy. You're an aristocrat.

MARY: But he thinks I'm pretty—and he likes the way I talk. He just sits there fascinated.

ELIZABETH: Look here, Mary—he is just not of your class. Lincoln is *not of your class.*

MARY: I wish he were here tonight to see these flowers in my hair.

(*Re-enter* DR. HENRY.)

Oh, good evening, Dr. Henry (*turns and moves toward him*). I want to talk to you about what we were discussing—second sight!

(*Exit* ELIZABETH.)

(DR. HENRY *turns to* MARY, *who leads him to the sofa downstage.*)

Have you read anything about the *occult* lately?

DR. HENRY: A lot about the occult—more than I should, I reckon. Instead of studyin' doctorin', I read up on occultism all the time. Trouble is there aren't many people you can talk to about it.

MARY: Do *you* believe there is such a thing as second sight?

DR. HENRY: Certainly do. Lots of cases where people had a strong feeling of what was going to happen—where they had a kind of vision of some event 'way in the future. Why?

MARY: When I was a little girl, I met Henry Clay. One day when I was eight years old, I said to him, "I love you, Mr. Clay, but I am not going to marry you because you are never going to be President

of the United States, and I am going to marry a President." And Mr. Clay laughed and said, "Child, you must have second sight."

DR. HENRY: *You* have second sight?

MARY: Yes, Dr. Henry, I feel perfectly certain that I have. Do you believe that it is possible even though I don't go into trances?

DR. HENRY: Yes, Miss Todd, I do. Whatever power any person has in occultism, that person always knows it. Doesn't make any difference how they get the messages—through ears or eyes or mind—they *know*.

MARY (*eagerly*): That's it, that's right. I see things in mirrors. Once my mother lost her purse with a lot of money in it—and I saw in the mirror where it was. I've had things like that happen often, but I didn't tell anybody. As you say—you can't talk to everybody. (*Whispering.*) They think you're insane.

(*Enter* ELIZABETH *with* NINIAN EDWARDS.)

Oh, please excuse me now, Dr. Henry. Well, Elizabeth, is everything ready for *my* guests?

(*Enter* WILLIAM HERNDON *and the other guests, each greeted by* MR. *and* MRS. EDWARDS *and* MARY *as they come in from the double doors left.*)

HERNDON: Good evening, Miss Todd. May I have the first dance?

MARY: Certainly, sir.

(MARY *and* HERNDON *go out.*)

(*As the guests leave the receiving line, they move downstage and stand about in circles of four or five in each circle, very informally. The music is again heard playing in the adjoining room. The following speeches come from different circles.*)

A WOMAN GUEST (*in circle left*): What a beautiful dress Mary has on this evening.

ANOTHER WOMAN GUEST: If I were lucky enough to have a banker for a father, I could have one just as pretty.

A MAN GUEST (*in circle right*): Miss Todd is pretty, but she tries to tell me how to run my newspaper.

SECOND MAN GUEST: Do you know she can read French newspapers?

A WOMAN GUEST: The Todds kept slaves down in Kentucky, but Mary told me she would never marry a man who believed in slavery.

ANOTHER WOMAN GUEST: But that was because Mary went to that Mentelle boarding-school run by a *northern* woman.

(*The others drift out toward the music.* HERNDON *and* MARY *enter from other room.*)

HERNDON: Thanks for that first time round, Miss Todd. You dance smooth like a snake gliding across the grass.

MARY (*irritated*): Young man, I do not care for that comparison. Aren't you a little young to be coming to these parties? Where do you live?

HERNDON: Over the Speed store, ma'am. I sleep upstairs in the big room. Mr. Speed and Mr. Lincoln sleep up there, too.

MARY: You sleep in the same room with Mr. Lincoln?

HERNDON: That's right, Miss Todd. Now there's a lawyer for you. I'm studying law in the same office.

MARY: Do you think that anybody could teach you to be a lawyer? You can't even talk to ladies at parties.

HERNDON: I know plenty about ladies. Here's part of a poem I've been learning—

"Whatever spiteful fools may say
Each jealous ranting yelper
No woman ever went astray
Without a man to help her."

MARY: You baby. You may know everything—but you understand nothing.

HERNDON: Maybe I don't understand you, Mary Todd, but I do

understand Mr. Lincoln. Why don't you leave him alone? He's crazy as a loon sometimes from the things you say to him.

MARY: How dare you talk to me like that! What I say to Mr. Lincoln is *my* business . . . none of *yours*.

HERNDON: All right—but it's the truth about what you do to him.

(STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS *enters gay and debonair*. MARY *turns away from* HERNDON *to* DOUGLAS.)

DOUGLAS: Good evening, Miss Todd. A pleasure, indeed, I assure you.

MARY: Good evening, Judge Douglas. Mr. Edwards tells me that you are now the leader of the Democratic party in Illinois. May I congratulate you?

DOUGLAS: If I am, it's just because I'm lucky. But aren't you the leader of Springfield society, Miss Todd? Let me congratulate *you*.

MARY: Thank you, Sir. But let us get back to politics. What about Mr. Lincoln and the Whigs?

DOUGLAS: Well, he may be at the top of the heap of Whigs, but the Whig party is doomed.

MARY: While the Democratic party is getting stronger—is that it?

DOUGLAS: Yes, but we're all in the grip of overwhelming forces. . . .

MARY: But if you were your party's choice for senator, then some day, perhaps, you might be elected President?

DOUGLAS: Not so fast, Miss Todd. You have to be rich even to be a senator. Public office is very expensive. But I think I might run for it some day—the presidency, I mean. . . .

MARY: Isn't it rather risky? Aren't you afraid you might die from. . . .

DOUGLAS: That's a chance anybody has to take—the higher the stakes, the greater the risk.

MARY: I think it would be more than I could bear.

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DOUGLAS (*meaningly*): Oh, come now—you'd like to be the wife of a public official, wouldn't you?

MARY: Is this in the nature of a proposal?

DOUGLAS: I think you would make a very fine wife for a-a-a *diplomat*—with your knowledge of French.

MARY: No diplomat for me. I want to marry a man who is going to the top.

DOUGLAS: You and I might go pretty far together.

(*This catches* MARY *a little off balance. She moves away from* DOUGLAS *to the window. It is beginning to thunder and lightning.*)

MARY: Isn't Mr. Lincoln likely to go far, too? He might have a brilliant career in Congress, don't you think?

DOUGLAS: No, Miss Todd. Without a stroke of political luck, like that lightning, that weather-beaten scarecrow will never be anything but a small-town lawyer—just a political hack.

MARY: You can see that he isn't very pretty. . . .

(DOUGLAS *offers his arm, and they go out to the other room to dance.*)

(*On the empty stage the storm is now seen to be at its height. The curtains at the window blow straight out into the room. Half the candles go out.* MARY *and* ELIZABETH *come running into the room, gather in the curtains, and attempt to relight the candles. A sudden blast blows all the lights out.* MARY *sits quickly on the horsehair sofa.* ELIZABETH *runs out for a lighted candle after getting the window closed. Music stops. Sounds from the other room of closing windows, etc.*)

(*The stage remains dark except for flashes of lightning coming through the window. These are now less sharp. Behind the pier glass, a soft unearthly light begins to glow.* MARY *gazes at it entranced. As the light comes up behind the scrim, we see two figures standing together, as if at a reception in the White House. They look like wax figures and remain absolutely motionless.* MARY *utters a little cry and runs over to look more closely. She crosses to stage right and gazes open-mouthed. The light behind the glass begins to go down.* MARY *leans against a chair. Voices sound offstage. As*

the lights behind the mirror die away, ELIZABETH *and two or three guests rush into the parlor carrying lighted candles. They run to the walls and light the candles.)*

(*Among the guests who come in is* DR. HENRY, *who sees* MARY *sitting on the love seat downstage. He walks over to her.*)

DR. HENRY: Quite a storm, quite a storm, Miss Todd.

(MARY *looks up relieved to see it is* DR. HENRY. *She gives a quick glance at the other guests, who are now starting back to the other room. She points to the pier glass excitedly—but without a word. He stares at it and looks back at her.*)

MARY: The mirror—Doctor, I've seen it—I know. . . .

DR. HENRY: What? Seen what?

MARY: The mirror—don't you remember—my second sight?

DR. HENRY: Oh, yes, what was it?

MARY: I know.

DR. HENRY: What have you seen?

MARY: The White House—Mr. Lincoln—President—with me—his wife.

DR. HENRY: What? Lincoln President? Not much chance of that.

MARY: Now I know—Dr. Henry—I will see every important event of my life before it happens.

(MARY *is interrupted by the approach of* DOUGLAS. *The orchestra is now playing a fast gallop, and other dancers are moving about the room.* DR. HENRY *moves back at the approach of* DOUGLAS. DOUGLAS *is polite, solicitous, suddenly almost tender—for he sees that* MARY *has been shaken by something, which he assumes to be the storm.*)

DOUGLAS: I see no reason to be afraid of lightning. I'd never know it if it hit me.

MARY: That's because you drink too much.

(DOUGLAS *laughs, but* MARY *never smiles. He looks at her keenly. She looks straight back and says:*)

I have been thinking over our conversation. It might interest you, Judge Douglas, to know that I have decided to give you up.

DOUGLAS: Why?

MARY: I don't think you will ever get to the *top*.

(DOUGLAS *smiles and bows.* MARY *rises to accept his arm. They start toward the door. The orchestra starts "The Lancers." Couples entering start dancing about the parlor.* MARY *and* DOUGLAS *start galloping about with the others.*)

(ELIZABETH *and a guest dance near them.* ELIZABETH *backs up to* MARY *and says downstage over her shoulder:*)

ELIZABETH: You don't lose any time, sister.

MARY (*aside, but downstage, almost shouts over the music*): I'm going to marry Mr. Lincoln.

ELIZABETH (*horrified, but keeping on with her dancing*): Why?

MARY: He's going to be President!!

CURTAIN

ACT II

The set is the upstairs sitting room on the second floor of the White House. It is informal with lace-curtained windows, comfortable chairs. At right is an old-fashioned dressing table, with a mahogany mirror above it, seen in profile by the audience. At right a wall of the room runs parallel to the footlights about one-fourth of the width of the stage about halfway downstage. Behind this wall and behind the mirror on the wall connected with it are the lights and wax figures of the inner stage set up to show the box at Ford's Theater at the moment of the assassination. It is evening of a day in February, 1862. Door upstage to hall—and a door right downstage to bedroom.

At rise MARY *is standing on a stool.* MRS. ELIZA KECKLEY *is on her knees working on the hem of the dress.*

MARY: It fits perfectly, Lisa. You are very clever with your needle and your fingers.

KECKLEY: Thank you, Mrs. Lincoln. May I say how pleasant it is to work for you?

MARY: I want you to work for me and for no one else.

KECKLEY: Mrs. Lincoln, I was a slave until I was thirty-seven years old. You don't know what it means to have a white lady so kindly—so friendly. . . .

MARY: I have decided to wear nothing but colors. You may have my black silk dresses. Would you like them?

KECKLEY: Oh, thank you, Mrs. Lincoln.

MARY (*adjusting dress*): Liza, I had to get up four times with Willie last night.

KECKLEY: What does the new doctor say?

MARY: He thinks Willie is in great danger . . . but I am sure he is *not*.

KECKLEY: Isn't he a good doctor?

MARY: Yes . . . but I *know*. Willie is going to get *well*.

KECKLEY: You know something the doctor doesn't?

MARY: Do you know what they call second sight?

KECKLEY: No, Ma'am.

MARY: It's the power to see into the future, Liza. I have that power.

KECKLEY: Oh, Mrs. Lincoln. . . .

MARY: Yes, I can see what will happen before it occurs. . . . If anything really threatened my Willie, my mirror would tell me.

KECKLEY: How can a mirror tell you?

MARY: Liza, the spirits of people hover about us in the air, after they are dead. . . .

KECKLEY: Mrs. Lincoln, I believe in angels, but I didn't know *you* would believe in ghosts.

MARY: Not ghosts—unseen *forces*—like the electricity in telegraph wires.

KECKLEY: You mean the spirits can send messages?

MARY: Yes, sometimes by rapping—sometimes by trances—sometimes in mirrors. . . .

KECKLEY: You had messages from dead people?

MARY: Judge Douglas, our good friend from Illinois, died last year, you know. And a girl—last Wednesday—went into a trance in *this very room* and brought us a message from him.

KECKLEY: Spirits right in this room?

MARY: Yes. Right in this room—in the air—invisible.

KECKLEY: Maybe hearing us talking?

MARY: Yes, Liza, trying to help us. . . .

(*Knocking at the door.*)

KECKLEY: What was that?

MARY: Sounded like someone knocking. Go to the door.

KECKLEY: Mrs. Lincoln, can't we just sit—and listen. . . . Those spirits. . . .

(*More knocking at door upstage.*)

MARY: Don't be afraid. Liza, go open the door. . . .

(MRS. KECKLEY *gingerly opens the door. Enter* ELIZABETH *in evening dress.*)

ELIZABETH: Dear sister, it's been so long. . . .

MARY (*embracing her*): Elizabeth, I am so happy to see you.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much for inviting us to the reception. It's my first chance to see the diplomats and the great ladies of the Capital.

MARY: Look at my wonderful dress from New York. No other lady in Washington will have one more beautiful.

ELIZABETH: It certainly is becoming to you, Mary—but won't it make them green with envy?

MARY: I have to show these Washington ladies that, even though I come from the prairies, I know how to dress and talk.

ELIZABETH: I remember when you started wearing flowers in your hair—and *now everybody* does it.

MARY: I have always understood fashion, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: But how can you win over these easterners—with all their money?

MARY: I have as good a family and a better education than most of them; and besides—they have no way of knowing the future—and I have.

ELIZABETH: But they *will* talk about you—they *will stab* you in the back.

MARY: You remember when I was a little girl I told you I was going to be the wife of a President some day—and now I am. . . . Well, I am going to be the First Lady . . . in every sense of the word.

ELIZABETH: You will never win them—they will snub you every time they can. . . .

(*Music begins offstage and gets louder and louder.* MARY *rises and begins to move about the stage, circling in time to the music, smiling gaily at* ELIZABETH.)

MARY: You will see . . . but now we must go down to meet them.

(MARY *and* ELIZABETH *go out.* MRS. KECKLEY *moves about the room.* JOHN PARKER *enters.*)

PARKER: Keckley, where can I find Mrs. Lincoln?

KECKLEY: She is downstairs at the big reception. Where have you been the last few days?

PARKER: I've been in the guardhouse—just for taking a couple of drinks. Will Mrs. Lincoln be coming up here directly?

KECKLEY: She might come up to see Willie—he's got the fever bad. Are you on guard on this floor tonight?

PARKER: No.

(*Enter* MARY.)

MARY: Liza, I forgot my fan. Why, Parker, I thought you were on leave. . . .

PARKER: I was, Mrs. Lincoln, but could I speak to you a minute —it's about my boy.

MARY: Parker, I have guests downstairs. . . .

PARKER: We have a sick child, too, Ma'am. That's why my wife asked me.

MARY: You have a sick boy? What's the matter with him?

PARKER: I think it's the typhoid, Madam. He has a bad fever.

MARY: Well, get a good doctor (*she turns toward door*).

PARKER: Mrs. Lincoln, please. . . . They've taken me off the White House guard and . . . if I can't get back, I'll probably be drafted for the regular Army. Please, Mrs. Lincoln.

MARY: Who took you off the White House guard?

PARKER: Colonel Lamon took me off—just for taking a few drinks.

MARY: For drinking? Ward Lamon ordered you out for drinking?

PARKER: Yes, Mrs. Lincoln. Please, I don't want to leave my wife and my son. . . .

MARY: Hill Lamon was drunk much of the time in Illinois. Why should he put *you* out for drinking? How old is your child?

PARKER: Same age as Master Willie.

(MARY *goes to desk and writes.*)

MARY: I will write an order putting you back.

PARKER: If you will, Mrs. Lincoln, I'll never drink again.

MARY (*reading what she has written*): "John F. Parker has been detailed for duty at the Executive Mansion by order of Mrs. Lincoln." (*Hands him the paper.*)

PARKER: Thank you, Mrs. Lincoln.

(*Exit* PARKER.)

MARY: Liza, is Willie asleep again?

KECKLEY: Yes, Mrs. Lincoln.

(MARY *picks up her fan. Exit* MARY *with* MRS. KECKLEY.)

(*Enter* WARD HILL LAMON, *carrying banjo, and* HERNDON *with half-empty bottle of whiskey. They pass bottle back and forth and drink during following.*)

LAMON: I reckon no one'll bother us in here, friend Herndon. Sit down and let's swap stories—just like when we were brother lawyers back in Illinois.

HERNDON: Certainly don't seem like ten years—only about ten minutes ago. . . . Do you still carry *two* guns and *two* knives? How does it feel bein' marshall of the District of Columbia?

LAMON: Well, it helps out a lot bein' born in Virginia. I'm a gentleman, I hope—by education and instinct. And I still play the banjo for Mr. Lincoln. I see you still favor *patent*-leather shoes.

HERNDON: Yes, sir—Mr. Lincoln used to say, "Billy, you're too rampant and spontaneous! Don't shoot so high—so me and the common people can understand you." You remember what a heap of persuadin' it took to get me to lay aside those long, mysterious-soundin' words?

LAMON: What do they think about the President out there now?

HERNDON (*as if making a speech*): What is Lincoln doing? (*Exploding.*) If I were Lincoln, I would declare that all slaves should be free and stand emancipated. I would be this age's great hero.

LAMON: Take it easy, Billy. I heard your wife died last summer.

HERNDON: That's right. Things have not been so good for me. Lincoln's wife been givin' him trouble, too, I hear. She always did mess up his political dickerin'—stickin' her hand in. . . .

LAMON: Yes, she sends orders to General McClellan—she even went to see him last week about an exchange for a Confederate officer. My feelin' is she even bosses her own children too much.

HERNDON: Whoever joins the Todd family gets the worst of it—it's not a family but like joinin' a religious cult—you put yourself in their hands. You know God gets along with one "d," but the Todd family has to have two. (*Laughs.*)

LAMON: She looked mighty proud down there tonight. Got any new stories?

HERNDON: If I tell you a good story, you got to sing—is that a bargain?

LAMON: That's a bargain.

HERNDON: I brought this story all the way from Springfield for the President. It is about a yellow dog.

(*He tells a Lincoln story.*)

LAMON: Well, now—let's see if I can remember one of those campaign songs.

(LAMON *sings and plays Stephen Foster's "Camptown Races" and "Oh, Susannah"—one verse each, the words being a political parody used in the election of 1860. Starts a second verse but is interrupted by entrance of* MARY, *who is furious.*)

MARY: Mr. Lamon, have you lost your senses? With my son so sick in the next room you should. . . .

(HERNDON *rises and starts to move toward her uncertainly.*)

Sit down, Mr. Herndon!

HERNDON: Just getting up to say "Howdy-do," Mrs. Lincoln.

(HERNDON *sits.*)

MARY: Just because Mr. Lincoln invited you to this reception . . . does that give you the right to turn it into a public house with drinking and carousing?

HERNDON: Great snakes, Mrs. Lincoln! We're just swapping yarns.

MARY: Even if you have no manners, Mr. Herndon, you should show respect for your hostess. . . .

HERNDON (*bowing elaborately*): The First Lady to arrive at the top from the prairies. . . .

MARY: Mr. Herndon, you should stay in the backwoods where you. . . .

HERNDON: *You* went husband-hunting in the backwoods.

LAMON: Take it easy, Billy.

HERNDON: Why she *trapped* Lincoln. I guess *I* know all about that. . . .

MARY: Don't you dare talk like that in my house!

HERNDON (*quite drunkenly*): Don't dare me, Mary Todd—*I* know why you married Abe Lincoln. . . .

LAMON: Listen, friend Herndon—you shouldn't debate with a lady about her marriage.

HERNDON: But it's the God's truth, Lamon. She married him for spite—just to get revenge on him.

MARY: Don't say such a thing.

LAMON: Hold on, Billy.

MARY: Mr. Herndon, you drink too much.

HERNDON: Mary Todd, you boss too much. You tried to boss everybody in Springfield—now you're trying to queen it over everybody here.

MARY: Leave this house at once.

(HERNDON *goes out door upstage.* MARY *bursts into tears.* LAMON *moves over toward her.*)

LAMON: Herndon had no call to say all those things, Mrs. Lincoln. I apologize for him.

MARY: He was a bad influence on my husband—and on you, too, Colonel Lamon.

LAMON: Please leave me out of this.

MARY: How *can* I heave you out? You were singing and playing a banjo, weren't you?

LAMON: But nobody downstairs hears it. You got the Marine Band downstairs. They play a lot louder than I do.

MARY: I have a sick boy in the next room, Colonel Lamon. Couldn't you have a little consideration for him?

LAMON: You didn't think of my man when you ordered him to ride in the rain with your child.

MARY: I can order a soldier to accompany my son any time—rain or shine.

LAMON: Mrs. Lincoln, you issue too many orders. . . .

(LAMON *is interrupted by* MRS. KECKLEY, *who runs into the room from door upstage and says excitedly:*)

KECKLEY: Please come, Mrs. Lincoln. Willie's calling for you.

(MRS. KECKLEY *and* MARY *go out.* LAMON *puts his banjo in its case and corks the bottle and puts it in his rear pocket. In walk* DR. HENRY *and* ELIZABETH.)

DR. HENRY: What's the matter, Colonel Lamon? Why isn't Mrs. Lincoln downstairs?

LAMON: Her boy Willie is having a bad spell. She's in there tending to him.

ELIZABETH: Isn't it a shame to have illness just at a time when Mary is trying to show these Washington women. . . .

LAMON: If you folks will pardon me, I think I'll go back downstairs.

(*Exit* LAMON *through door upstage.*)

ELIZABETH: Mary is usually so upset when any of her children are sick, but tonight she was cool and gay and proud. I'm sure he will be all right.

DR. HENRY: Did all the first families of Washington come to the reception?

ELIZABETH: To tell the truth, Doctor, Mary has been snubbed. Very few of them came.

DR. HENRY: Well, now, that's too bad.

ELIZABETH: It's so unfair. They haven't even met her. How can they judge her without talking to her?

DR. HENRY: They've been talking *about* her ever since she came to Washington, and they tell me it's not flattering talk.

(*In comes* MRS. KECKLEY, *sobbing violently.*)

ELIZABETH: Keckley, is he worse?

(MRS. KECKLEY *nods violently.* ELIZABETH *starts to pace up and down.*) That awful fever. Poor Mary.

DR. HENRY: Is Mr. Lincoln in there with the doctors?

KECKLEY: Yes, sir.

(*Suddenly a scream is heard offstage. This throws* MRS. KECKLEY *into a new fit of crying.* ELIZABETH *stops walking and stares at* DR. HENRY.)

ELIZABETH: That sounded like Mary.

DR. HENRY: Maybe she needs you.

(*The door opens, and* MARY *rushes in and throws her arms around* ELIZABETH, *sobbing and moaning.* MRS. KECKLEY *jumps and runs out of the room.*)

ELIZABETH: Oh, Mary, my poor dear. . . .

MARY: I'm so afraid . . . he may die. He's cold!

ELIZABETH: Now, Mary, he'll pull through.

(DR. HENRY *walks over and pats* MARY'S *shoulder.*)

DR. HENRY: Don't be afraid.

(MRS. KECKLEY *suddenly runs back into the room, almost screaming.*)

KECKLEY: Mrs. Lincoln . . . come. . . .

(MARY, *followed by* MRS. KECKLEY, *runs out of door upstage.* ELIZABETH *sinks down on a chair with her head in her hands.* DR. HENRY *walks slowly over toward her.*)

DR. HENRY: Only twelve years old.

(*Offstage there is another scream.* ELIZABETH *looks up.*)

ELIZABETH: Poor Mary . . . !

DR. HENRY: That lovely boy. . . .

(MRS. KECKLEY *enters room slowly, sobbing, her head in hands.*)

KECKLEY: Willie's gone. . . .

(MARY *enters from upstage door, walking slowly, her hands at her sides.* ELIZABETH *rushes to her, but she continues to move downstage and sits down quietly in a chair, staring straight ahead of her.*)

ELIZABETH: Mary. . . .

MARY (*very quietly*): Go in and tell Mr. Lincoln that I now have recovered my self-control. I will be quiet with Dr. Henry.

ELIZABETH: Mary, are you all right? You're so calm.

MARY: I'll—I will—be quiet—with Dr. Henry. Please—go tell my husband—that I *am* calm—now.

(*Exit* ELIZABETH.)

(*Pause.*) Dr. Henry, do you remember—the talks we had—many years ago?

DR. HENRY: About the mirror, Mrs. Lincoln?

MARY: Why . . . why didn't the mirror warn me?

DR. HENRY: Well . . . well.

MARY: If I really had second sight—and did not see this—then something has gone out of me—out of me.

DR. HENRY: Well—I wouldn't know.

MARY: Something has gone out of me. Dr. Henry, I saw my husband's future—but now my Willie—when I needed it most. The power is gone.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene is same as Act II. Time is an evening in April, 1865. Curtain rises on DR. HENRY, *who is waiting. Enter* MARY.

DR. HENRY: Good evening, good evening, Mrs. Lincoln.

MARY: How do you do, Dr. Henry. We have missed you during the years you have been in the West.

DR. HENRY: Thank you, Mrs. Lincoln. It's pleasant to be in Washington again.

MARY: I'm only sorry that we haven't more time. But we're going to the theater. . . .

DR. HENRY: May I compliment you on your dress? It's very beautiful. . . . But must you always wear black? I remember how lovely you looked in white satin. . . .

MARY: I just can't bring myself to wear color again. When Willie died it seemed as if a part of me slipped away. . . . (*Pause.*) I'll never forget how you pulled Mr. Lincoln out of his sickness—that melancholy period back in Springfield. Do you remember how wretched he was—how unhappy? And you restored him with your medical magic. . . .

DR. HENRY: Oh, he has a rugged constitution, Ma'am. That's what pulled him out of it; I didn't.

MARY: Can you help *me* now—with your medical magic?

DR. HENRY: Well, I can try. . . .

MARY: You know it is three years, one month, and twenty-five days since dear Willie died?

DR. HENRY: That long?

MARY: But he still lives, Dr. Henry. . . . He comes to me every night. . . . He stands at the foot of my bed with . . . with the same sweet smile he always had. . . . (*Pause.*) Oh, Doctor—why did he have to die?

DR. HENRY: Mrs. Lincoln, you. . . .

MARY: Why didn't I know? Why didn't my mirror tell me?

DR. HENRY: No one knows. . . .

MARY: It failed me, Doctor—it failed me.

DR. HENRY: Now don't you worry about it. . . .

MARY: You know since Willie died. . . . (*She looks about apprehensively and whispers:*) I think Mr. Lincoln fears for my brain.

DR. HENRY: But the mirror always told you the truth. . . .

MARY: There's something I must tell you, Dr. Henry, but no one else must ever know. It happened just after Willie died. My husband took me to the window. . . . He pointed to that big white building. . . .

DR. HENRY: You mean the insane asylum?

MARY: Yes, and he said—I can hear him now—he said, "Mother, control your grief or it will drive you mad. We may have to send you there."

DR. HENRY: Oh, Mrs. Lincoln—he wouldn't do that. . . .

MARY: You think there's no danger of such a thing, Dr. Henry?

DR. HENRY: Oh, no, Madam, no one would think of doing anything. . . .

MARY: But I can never mention anything occult to my husband. . . .

DR. HENRY: But, Mrs. Lincoln—why not?

MARY: Mr. Lincoln allowed me to have seances right here in the White House. Then he stopped them. Now he refuses to let me talk about such things.

DR. HENRY: Well . . . times will be easier now. . . . The war is over . . . and I've always said. . . .

(DR. HENRY *is interrupted by loud knocks on door upstage.* MARY *starts and looks at him. She pulls herself together.*)

MARY: Come in, please.

(COLONEL CROOK *enters.*)

CROOK: Colonel Crook in charge of the guard. Mrs. Lincoln, the carriage will leave for the theater in five minutes.

MARY: Thank you, Colonel, I will get ready at once, This is Dr. Henry, one of our old friends from Illinois. Colonel Crook, Dr. Henry.

CROOK: How do you do, sir.

DR. HENRY: Glad to meet you, Colonel. Colonel, do you think it safe for the President to go to the theater tonight?

CROOK: We paraded him through Richmond without a scratch. There may be southern sympathizers in the audience—but the war is over. We won't have any trouble. . . .

DR. HENRY: I'm glad to hear you say that, Colonel.

CROOK: But, just the same, I'm going to station eight men right near the President's box. John Parker will be outside the door of it. . . .

MARY: Will you excuse me, Doctor? I will be back in a moment. . . .

DR. HENRY: Certainly, Mrs. Lincoln.

(*Exit* MARY.)

CROOK: We caught John Parker with a bottle, drinking on duty. He's a muddlehead, deliberately fogs himself. . . . But Mrs. Lincoln intercedes for him. . . .

DR. HENRY: Say, he oughtn't to do that. If I remember rightly, he's got a boy same age as Master Willie—you remember—who died? . . .

CROOK: But this fellow Parker. . . .

DR. HENRY: Can't you recommend to the President that he stay home tonight?

CROOK: I'm charged with protecting the life of the President, not advising him on his plans. Goodbye to you, sir.

(*Exit* COLONEL CROOK.)

DR. HENRY: Goodbye, Colonel.

(DR. HENRY *sits down to wait. Enter* MARY *with her outer wraps on, ready to leave for the theater.*)

MARY: When can I see you again, Dr. Henry?

DR. HENRY: I have a ticket for the play, Mrs. Lincoln. I'll be in the audience, and I can come up to the box after the first act if you like.

MARY: Please do, Dr. Henry. I may need you. I'm worried about. . . .

DR. HENRY: Now, Mrs. Lincoln, everything is going to be all right. He's been to the theater lots of time . . . and nothing. . . .

MARY: But it's so hard to brush aside these dreams. Mr. Lincoln has one that keeps coming back—he had it again. Oh, doctor, will I be all right?

DR. HENRY: Yes, Madam, you are as good as ever, and your mind is more than a match for anybody's—always has been—always will be. . . .

MARY: Thank you, Doctor. You are helping me to lose this melancholy. . . .

DR. HENRY: Fresh air . . . people . . . visits to New York—you'll soon be that gay lady I knew in Springfield. . . .

MARY: You know, Doctor, we're both looking forward to a new period in our lives. . . .

(*As* MARY *has been speaking, the lights have come up on the scene behind the wall, and, as she looks in the mirror, she and the audience see the armchair and the wax figures in the box at the moment of the assassination.*)

(MARY *screams.*)

Oh . . . he's shot my husband. . . . Help. . . .

(DR. HENRY *leaps up.* MARY *staggers against him. He looks in the mirror—sees nothing. The lights have now died away again.*)

DR. HENRY: What is it?

MARY: Did you see it?

DR. HENRY: No—what—see what?

MARY: The assassin . . . the theater. . . . He shot him. . . . My husband. . . . Live. . . . Live . . . you must live. . . .

DR. HENRY: What are you saying?

MARY: The box . . . at the theater . . . a man with a gun. . . . He shot my husband. . . . My husband in the rocking chair. . . .

DR. HENRY: Rocking chair. . . . In a theater . . . ?

MARY: Yes . . . theater. . . . I saw the audience . . . the stage. . . . Oh, Doctor . . . *it's tonight*. . . .

(MARY *collapses on the floor.* DR. HENRY *tries to revive her. She rises to a sitting position. She raises her right hand and stares at it. She speaks directly to her hand, holding it in front of her, still sitting on the floor.*)

How could you? . . . How could you sign that order? . . . Yes . . . you . . . you . . . put John Parker back on the guard. . . . You put John Parker outside that box. . . . If only I had sent someone else upstairs for my fan. . . . If only John Parker had kept his promise not to drink again.

(DR. HENRY *succeeds in getting* MARY *up off the floor and into a chair. Staring into space unaware of his presence, she speaks again in a tone that is tender and reminiscent.*)

When Reverend Dresser married us . . . you gave me a wedding ring . . . *my* wedding ring . . . inside you have written: "A. L. to Mary —November eighth, eighteen hundred forty-two. Love is eternal." Those first years . . . you were hard to understand, Father. . . . Your vest was always wrinkled. . . . Every morning I had to look to it to see that you had a necktie on. . . . And you always came home . . . and put your arms around me . . .when I was frightened by thunder and lightning. . . .

DR HENRY: Shall I call someone, Mrs. Lincoln?

(MARY *pays no attention to* DR. HENRY.)

MARY: Then Eddie died . . . our second son . . . four years old. . . . I can hear that Presbyterian—Smith—preaching at the funeral. . . . You cried. . . . I never saw you cry before . . . Father. . . . After that you wanted me to go to the Presbyterian church with you. . . . You forgot that as a little girl I was an Episcopalian in Kentucky. . . . Then I went to Smith's Presbyterian church with you. . . . And every Sunday when I heard his voice . . . I could still feel you holding our baby Eddie. . . .

(*Knocks on door upstage.* DR. HENRY *places his hand on* MARY'S *shoulder.*)

DR. HENRY: Mrs. Lincoln . . . there's someone at the door. . . .

(MARY *disregards* DR. HENRY, *rises to her feet, and walks slowly downstage. She nods once or twice to imaginary persons and, as if she were addressing a small group around her, speaks in a measured, formal manner.*)

MARY: Alas, the ways of Providence are inscrutable. Clouds and darkness surround us, yet heaven is just, and the day of triumph will surely come, when justice and truth will be vindicated. . . . It is the lot of humanity to suffer—otherwise, we would cling too fondly to earth and its transitory enjoyments. . . . My beloved husband's devotion to me was so great that . . . that . . . (*she falters*). . . . Our dearly beloved husband was the light of our eyes—we never felt, notwithstanding our great love for him, so good and great was he, that we could love him sufficiently . . . (*she sways*). . . . (*Screaming:*) Oh, my God—I am giving my husband to die!

(MARY *falls against* DR. HENRY'S *shoulder, mumbling incoherently. He gets her into a chair—she sits rigid. More knocking on upstage door.* MARY *motions to* DR. HENRY *to open it. He goes upstage and opens door, and* COLONEL CROOK *enters.*)

CROOK: Anything wrong here? I heard a scream. . . .

MARY (*quietly, rigidly*): Go tell my husband—I don't wish to . . . go . . . to the theater. . . . I have . . . I have . . . a-a-a headache. . . .

DR. HENRY (*as* COLONEL CROOK *stands open-mouthed*): Go on, man —tell Mr. Lincoln she has a headache. . . . You heard her. . . .

(*Exit* COLONEL CROOK *through door upstage.*)

Are you all right? Can I help you?

MARY: Not one word, Doctor, about the mirror.

DR. HENRY: No, no. Certainly not. . . .

MARY: Dr. Henry, do you still believe in second sight . . . ?

DR. HENRY: No, not as I used to. . . . Found it never did me any good. . . . Mr. Lincoln is right. . . . Try to put it out of your mind. . . .

MARY: I will. . . . I will. . . . He must not think. . . .

(*Enter* COLONEL CROOK *without knocking.*)

CROOK: The President's in the next room, Ma'am. Says he will have to go on without you. Says the people expect to see him. . . .

MARY: No. . . . No. . . . No. . . . He must not go without me. . . . I'll go with him. . . . Tell him . . . I am coming. . . .

(*Exit* COLONEL CROOK.)

(MARY *moves about the room extinguishing lights. This is a device on her part to get control of herself.*)

This afternoon—while we were driving . . . Mr. Lincoln foretold our future—peace—travel—home life. . . . He was almost merry.

(MARY *fusses with her clothes, straightens out things on a table, and does other unnecessary acts. She straightens her dress and bonnet. She embraces* DR. HENRY. *The door upstage right opens, and a strong yellow light comes onto the half-lit stage. She moves straight into it, slowly walking toward the doorway.*)

Dear husband, you almost startle me by your great cheerfulness.

CURTAIN

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